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Greetings Senator Harp, Representative Toni Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in regards to the budget deficit and how it may impact community college education here in Connecticut. I am a Registered Nurse and an Assistant Professor in the CT Community College Nursing Program (CT-CCNP) at Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) in Norwich, CT. Community College education is necessary in order to promote and sustain the economic recovery of this state. Any restructuring, allocation of funds, or elimination of funds deserves thoughtful consideration.

As an educator in the CT-CCNP at TRCC, I teach and help prepare qualified candidates to graduate, and become eligible to sit for the state-licensing exam in order to practice as a Registered Nurse in CT. These programs must be maintained in order to provide our communities with the nursing workforce needed. Much speculation exists as to whether there is a nursing shortage or whether there will be a nursing shortage in the future. Studies done to project national shortfalls determine that one million RN positions will be vacant by 2020 with an inability to fill 500,000 of the vacant positions, by 2025. These figures exist based on the educational resources we have in place currently (Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief, 2010).

Nationally, 45.4% of the Registered Nurses practicing are graduates from Associate degree programs (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). The CCC's overcome the barriers to higher education: cost, distance, and the ability to meet the needs of a diverse population. Community colleges have realized record enrollment, and waiting lists have been generated for qualified nursing candidates. The CT-CCNP, a consortium of six CCC, recognizes the value of continued education for the Registered Nurse. Several articulation agreements with state and private universities are in place to provide a seamless transition into a baccalaureate and graduate education. Reducing the availability to associate degree-nursing education will be counter-productive in the overall mission of meeting the needs of qualified and highly educated nurses to care for our citizens.

Generally speaking, the return for the investment of a community college education cannot be disputed. In a study to determine the socioeconomic impact of community college education, the Economic Modeling Specialist Inc. (EMSI), 2008, identified many benefits. For every dollar a CCC student spends, they realize a return of eight dollars in earnings. An educated community results in improved

health, and decreased welfare and crime. Enrolled CCC students account for \$5 billion (2.3% of the state revenue), and save the state \$16.1 million once the student enters the workforce (Robinson, & Christophersin, 2008).

This testimony focuses on the viability of the CT-CCNP however; I would be remiss not to recognize the nursing program would not exist without liberal arts, math, and sciences. This reinforces the need to thoughtfully consider any budget cuts that would result in a reduction of resources that will negatively impact the programs that contribute to the sustainability of the socioeconomic prosperity of the state. Again, thank you for this opportunity to be heard, and thank you for your time and consideration on this very challenging and important issue.

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